

THE ELEVENTH FLOWER: ECONOMIA

Even though, O my Lord, I obey your Spirit and do what is commanded, all my deeds, actions and thoughts still have to be examined by my fellow workers, for I am not alone. I am only one member of the multitude of Your Church. I have to give an account to my colleagues and a clear and sound explanation based on Your epiphanies.

Yes, when I break a rule or change it, I should be asked why. Why did I eat with the uncircumcised?¹ Why did I alter what is commonly known? This was the question of my colleagues and not why I preached nor why I was baptized. I broke a rule and therefore, the exclusivity of the Faith according to the human “point of view.” This is a great council in your Church, which is observing the deeds of their members and correcting them if necessary.

But should I have ordered the Gentiles to be circumcised first before I sat and ate with them? Was this the reason why I did not go and preach to them before your Spirit revealed your wish and corrected my understanding? This is your invisible and indirect revelation of your true teaching, not the teaching of my conceptions and my incomplete ideas.

Your Spirit revealed Himself in actions and guided my steps in your “Way” to do whatever is from above and according to the divine “point of view.” Therefore, I was not afraid and I did not hesitate to go and follow the messengers’.² I went with them like a kidnapped person with his free consent to witness the fruit of the Spirit’s work in response to the Faith and deeds of the people. I was withdrawn willingly and joyfully because I want to observe the divine “point of view,” the providence, that transmitted the Good News; the repentance to life to the entire world.³

I used the *Economia* guided by the Spirit for the glory of your name even though I know the rules, but your words also were clear to preach to all the nations regardless of their culture, color, religion and nationality. This knock on my door has opened my heart to those who do not belong to my tribe, to the strangers; those you asked me to heal their

¹ Acts 11: 3.

² Acts 11: 11.

³ Acts 11: 18.

wounds as they are my neighbors,⁴ for “a Christian does not live for himself,”⁵ but to God.⁶

O Lord, I was questioned for your name and I answered in your name. The Brethren have joyfully accepted what was revealed to them from my words because they witnessed the fruit of the Spirit’s actions.⁷ Therefore they neglected their own vision and replaced it with the divine vision. They became the visionaries of God and not of the Law because they came to the “fullness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also [they] were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ.”⁸

Preaching can cross all borders and demolish all the walls by the faithful who scatter...announcing, proclaiming and calling in the name of the Lord. But the enforcement, approval and seal of the Faith (the sacraments) have to be ministered by the ones who were initiated by the immediate action of the Lord unto them -- to the Apostles. The whole Church is united as one with a multitude of ministries; each member is a messenger of God with a special gift tailored to him. This is the wisdom of God, his grace and his mercy. We are all chosen. We are all called. We are all laborers. We are all vehicles, missionaries and visionaries, but each with a different ministry.

As a “son of exhortation” or “consolation,”⁹ I was sent by the Apostles to confirm what the Church has heard. And then I looked for help because it was indeed that the Hand of the Lord¹⁰ was in action and it was overwhelming. I sought help and I asked a newcomer, Paul to become a full participant and a laborer in the field of God. For a whole year,¹¹ we worked diligently in assembling the faithful to become imitators of Christ, calling them Christians.

Although we are a non-circumcised Church in a different city, we are still one church with the first church. We believe in the same faith. We believe in the same Lord who in

⁴ Luke 10: 25-37, the parable of the good Samaritan.

⁵ Demetrios Constantellos in his article “Varying Encounters with God in the Christian Life in *Orthodox Synthesis, The Unity of Theological Thought*, Ed. Joseph J. Allen, (SVS Press, New York, 1981), p. 120.

⁶ Romans 14: 8.

⁷ Acts 11: 4-18.

⁸ Colossians 2: 9-11.

⁹ Banabas means “son of exhortation or consolation”. Barnabas was counted as one of the twelve Apostles like Paul by the Apostles

¹⁰ Acts 11: 21.

¹¹ Acts 11: 26.

Him, we are united as one. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and not Peter, Paul, Barnabas or any of the Apostles. Our faith is In Him and we belong to Him. We bear His name and we preach and minister in His name; we are called Christians. We are taught the Faith by many persons but our faith is Faith in Christ.

This unity of Faith, besides the commandment of love even to our enemies, asks us to rush in to help our sister churches in their needs and to support them spiritually and physically. For this reason we collect material things for their physical needs and we pray and intercede for their spiritual needs.¹²

¹² Acts 11:30.